

MEETING OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL FOR THE CITY OF RICHMOND HILL
April 05, 2011

Present from City Council: Harold Fowler, *Mayor*; Jimmy Hires, *Mayor Pro-Tem*; *Councilmembers:* Marilyn Hodges, Van Hunter, Russ Carpenter

Staff Present: Michael Melton, *City Manager*; Ursula Lee, *City Clerk*; Steve Scholar, *Director of Planning & Zoning*; Billy Reynolds, *Police Chief*; Vernon Rushing, *Fire Chief*; Rick Lauver, *OMI*

Visitors: Jamie Parker, Billy Albritton, Drew Pierce, Michael Pierce, Barbara Smiley, Renee Boyle, Zoe Boyle, Dave Johnson, Dana Johnson, Harron Lee, Alec Metzger, John Gentry, Jo Hickson, Joseph Eddins, Dale Dudley, Hallie Martin, Geoffrey Carson, Neil Smiley, Ryan Smiley, Laura Smiley, Allison Smiley, Martha Kitchings, Dustin , Chad Rahara, Jon Sylvester, Brian Kessler, Walter Boyle, Trace Palmer, Russell Hightower, Kevin Winters, Brian Sayder, Lisa Winters, Johnny Farley, Roula Farley, Floyd Hilliard, Meagan Mowry, John Mowry, Joseph Ream, Daniel Ream

Mayor Harold Fowler called the meeting to order at 7:30 P.M. and Councilmember Carpenter gave the invocation. The pledge of allegiance was given.

Presentation to Eagle Scout. Eagle Scout Matthew McGuthry was not present.

Presentation to Walter Boyle. Mayor Fowler read the proclamation as follows.

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, Walter Boyle is a respected member of our community as well as a defender of the United States, and

WHEREAS, on March 19, 2011, he encountered another member of our community in mortal distress and did act with quick and decisive action to save her life, and

WHEREAS, the City of Richmond Hill is proud and grateful to Walter Boyle for his determined and positive reaction to the situation,

NOW THEREFORE, the City of Richmond Hill does publicly recognize and show its appreciation to Walter Boyle for his successful rescue of a fellow citizen by awarding him a "Key to the City".

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the City of Richmond Hill, Georgia to be affixed this 5th day of April, 2011.

Chief Billy Reynolds also presented a plaque to Mr. Boyle for his heroic act in saving Mrs. Smiley's life.

Minutes of the regular meeting held March 15, 2011, were approved as submitted in a motion by Councilmember Hodges. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Hires and carried by all.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS:

Administration and Personnel: Ursula Lee

Nothing to report.

Public Safety:

Police Department: Chief Billy Reynolds

Nothing to report.

Fire Department: Chief Vernon Rushing

Nothing to report.

Public Works: Rick Lauver

1. Selection of paint color for water tank. City Manager Mike Melton told Council the water tank will be painted blue and white with the city logo within the next few weeks unless Council would like to choose a different color. Mayor Fowler stated those colors would be fine.

Parks, Recreation and Culture: Harvey Lashley

Nothing to report.

Planning, Zoning and Code Enforcement: Steve Scholar

1. Approval/Disapproval of request from Mungo Homes, LLC, for a variance on the minimum lot width (feet) at the building line for lots 32, 33, 37, 39, 101 and 102 in Phase III of Live Oak Subdivision. The property is zoned PD, planned development. Mr. Scholar told Council they are trying to get all future homes to be built in a row. There would be various variances depending on the lots. A Public Hearing was held March 28, 2011 with no one speaking in opposition. The Planning & Zoning Commission did recommend approval.

Councilmember Carpenter made a motion to approve the request from Mungo Homes, LLC, for a variance on the minimum lot width (feet) at the building line for lots 32, 33, 37, 39, 101 and 102 in Phase III of Live Oak Subdivision. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Hunter and carried by all.

2. Approval/Disapproval of request from Mungo Homes, LLC, for a revised final subdivision plat for Phase III of Live Oak Subdivision. The property is zoned PD, planned development. Mr. Scholar noted the only change to final plat would be the previous variance allowance just approved by Council.

Councilmember Hunter made a motion to approve the request from Mungo Homes, LLC, for a revised final subdivision plat for Phase III of Live Oak Subdivision. The property is zoned PD, planned development. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Carpenter and carried by all.

3. Approval/Disapproval of request from John D. Gentry, Jr. for a variance on the number of buildings per lot to allow a second living quarter on his property at 36 North Oak Drive, Richmond Heights Subdivision. The property is zoned R-2, residential. Mr. Scholar told Council a few years ago it was built as a storage shed and at some point Mr. Gentry's sister-in-law moved in there. City Ordinance clearly states that there can only be one dwelling per lot. Mr. Scholar noted that he had talked with Mr. Gentry several times while the building was being built explaining that it could not be used as a dwelling. Mr. Gentry assured him it would not be used as a dwelling. A Public Hearing was held on March 28, 2011 with one neighbor speaking against and another neighbor speaking for it. Mr. Scholar noted that Council's packet contained a letter from Mr. Gentry stating his sister-in-law's situation and why he thinks it should be approved as a second dwelling. The request does not meet the requirements of the ordinance. Mr. Scholar told Council Mr. Gentry and his attorney Mr. Geoffrey Carson were present to answer any questions.

Mr. Gentry told Council it was denied last week because it would be used as a permanent residence; Mr. Gentry stated it would only be used by his sister-in-law approximately five years.

Mr. Kevin Winters stated his disapproval due to possibly setting a precedence.

Mr. Johnny Farley stated he would not like to see it pass as well because: first of all, it violates the city ordinance as it is now; and secondly, he would not like to see this set a precedent.

Mr. Buck Eddins spoke for the variance stating that he thought Mr. Gentry was simply trying to help out his ailing sister-in-law and this would not be a dwelling that could be rented out because there was no kitchen facility. If Council does not allow this Mr. Gentry's sister-in-law would probably have to be placed in a nursing home.

Ms. Lisa Winters stated she would not be against it if there was a guarantee that this would not happen again in the neighborhood. Ms. Winters feels for the Gentry's situation but a lot of people have ailing family members.

Councilmember Hires stated he didn't see how you could change city ordinance for one person and approve something like this.

Councilmember Hunter stated he has gone thru something similar to this and he understands the dilemma. This is hard for Council to make a decision like this, but he just didn't see how this could be approved the way the city ordinance is written.

Councilmember Carpenter commented he agrees with the other councilmembers.

Councilmember Hodges made a motion to disapprove the request from John D. Gentry, Jr. for a variance on the number of buildings per lot to allow a second living quarter on his property at 36 North Oak Drive, Richmond Heights Subdivision. The property is zoned R-2, residential. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Hires and carried by all.

4. Approval/Disapproval of request from Brian Snyder, Verizon Wireless/Cellular Sales for a variance of 109 square feet on building signs and total square footage in a C-1, neighborhood commercial district. The location of the store will be 70 Exchange Street. Mr. Scholar told Council this item was tabled at the last meeting. Mr. Scholar told Council the request has changed to only place two signs instead of three. The building elevations and site plan were approved at the last meeting. Mr. Scholar told Council Mr. Snyder was present to answer any questions.

Councilmember Carpenter stated that it was still a big sign facing the street.

Mr. Brian Snyder told Council the variance does look bigger and the Verizon logo is a tricky one. This is not out of the ordinary for a building and is similar to stores located in other municipalities. Councilmember Hodges asked how the sign compared to the one in Hilton Head. Mr. Snyder stated the signage at the Hilton Head store was much smaller but there are three signs there plus a plaza sign.

Mr. Snyder noted the biggest sign would be facing Exchange Street; it would be 91 sq. ft. and the one facing Hyw. 144 would be 51 sq. ft.

Councilmember Hunter asked what the recommendation of the Planning & Zoning Commission was. Mr. Scholar noted this did not go back before the Planning & Zoning Commission because this request was for a smaller variance. They had approved the larger variance.

Mayor Fowler commented he didn't think it would be that bad because it is not a free standing sign.

There was a brief discussion about the size and which way the signs would be facing, noting confusion on how they were shown on the site plan.

Councilmember Carpenter commented that he was still bothered with the threat of moving to Berwick. Mr. Snyder replied that it was not a threat; they had been

in the city for a number of years and would like to stay in the city.

Councilmember Hodges made a motion to disapprove the request from Brian Snyder, Verizon Wireless/Cellular Sales for a variance of 109 square feet on building signs and total square footage in a C-1, neighborhood commercial district. The location of the store will be 70 Exchange Street. The motion died for a lack of a second.

Councilmember Hodges changed the motion to table the request until the next meeting, seconded by Councilmember Carpenter. The motion was carried by all.

5. Approval/Disapproval of request from Homes of Integrity for a revised preliminary plat of J-Pod, Richmond Hill Plantation, now known as Heathrow, Richmond Hill Plantation. The property is zoned PD-2, planned development. Mr. Scholar reminded Council a preliminary plat was for 64 single family homes had been approved in March 2007; no homes have been built in this section yet. The new request would allow 80 single family homes, which still meets the requirements of the ordinance.

Councilmember Carpenter commented that he has a problem with adding 16 more homes; adding additional vehicles on congested roads as well as water/sewer.

Mr. Mowry stated that with the economy in the state it is in they were trying to cut the cost of the homes where people could afford them. If we left it at the 64 homes on larger lots the cost of homes would be between \$300,000 to \$400,000. Mr. Mowry stated that by the time those homes are built Hwy. 144 would be widened and the monies from the homes would help with improvements to the water/sewer plant. People are being more conservative in what they are paying for homes.

Councilmember Hunter noted that no homes have been built in this area for almost two years. Mr. Hunter stated that he thinks we would be doing a disservice to this builder as well as the community not to allow the builder any time to renegotiate this request. We just gave someone two weeks to revisit his request. Councilmember Hunter noted he is not saying that 80 lots is correct but there should be some alternative.

Councilmember Hodges made a motion to disapprove the request from Homes of Integrity for a revised preliminary plat of J-Pod, Richmond Hill Plantation, now known as Heathrow, Richmond Hill Plantation. The property is zoned PD-2, planned development. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Hires and approved by Councilmember Carpenter. Councilmember Hunter opposed. The motion carried 3 to 1.

Finance Director: Bob Whitmarsh

Nothing to report.

City Manager's Topics: Mike Melton

1. Approve/Disapprove resolution supporting Georgia Cities Week. Mayor Fowler read the Resolution as follows:

GEORGIA CITIES WEEK

April 17 – 23, 2011

RESOLUTION

A resolution of the City of Richmond Hill recognizing Georgia Cities Week, April 17-23, 2011 and encouraging all citizens to support the celebration and corresponding activities.

WHEREAS, city government is the closest to most citizens, and the one with the most direct daily impact upon its residents; and

WHEREAS, city government is administered for and by its citizens, and is dependent upon public commitment to and understanding of its many responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, city government officials and employees share the responsibility to pass along their understanding of public services and their benefits; and

WHEREAS, Georgia Cities Week is a very important time to recognize the important role played by the city government in our lives; and

WHEREAS, this week offers an important opportunity to spread the word to all the citizens of Georgia that they can shape and influence this branch of government which is closest to the people; and

WHEREAS, the Georgia Municipal Association and its member cities have joined together to teach students and other citizens about municipal government through a variety of different projects and information: and

WHEREAS, Georgia Cities Week offers an important opportunity to convey to all the citizens of Georgia that they can shape and influence government through their civic involvement.

NOW, therefore be it resolved that the City of Richmond Hill declares April 17-23, 2011 as Georgia Cities Week.

BE it further resolved that the city of Richmond Hill encourages all citizens, city government officials and employees to do everything possible to ensure that this week is recognized and celebrated accordingly.

PASSED and adopted by the City of Richmond Hill April 5, 2011

Councilmember Hodges made a motion to approve and sign the

resolution supporting Georgia Cities Week. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Carpenter and carried by all.

2. Community Video Tour proposal. Mr. Melton told Council he had included information in Council's packet and showed a short video showing the website and that the city's would be similar. Mr. Melton stated he would like to get Council's input and see if this is something Council would be interested in participating in. This video website is free to cities. Mr. Melton noted he thought this would be good for the city to get involved with.

Council consensus is to participate in adding the video tours to the city's website; in conjunction with the National League of Cities.

3. Discussion of Census results. Mr. Melton told Council that according to the latest census the City of Richmond Hill had 9,281 residents. That is in contrast to what the projected numbers show, almost 12,000 residents, and that was from the Census Department. Mr. Melton noted he has since learned from local residents that they were not counted due to the fact that their spouses were deployed. After meeting with GMA/ACCG he found out it is the policy of the Census Department that those citizens that are deployed are counted at their home of record (where they entered military service) even though they may own a home here. The City of Hinesville had a huge drop in population. Mr. Melton stated he thinks it is wrong along with other municipalities because it actually hurts funding to those municipalities. We are going to join forces with those municipalities to try and appeal the census count.

Councilmember Hodges commented to just let Council know what they need to do.

Public Relations:

Nothing to report.

Special Committees:

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

1. Discussion of placement of advertisement in Fort Stewart & Hunter Army Airfield Post Guide and Telephone Directory. Mr. Melton reminded Council at the last meeting they had decided to see if this was something the CVB might be interested in. Mr. Melton noted the CVB declined the advertisement at their meeting; so he was bringing this back before Council.

Councilmember Hodges made a motion to disapprove the placement of advertisement in Fort Stewart & Hunter Army Airfield Post Guide and Telephone Directory. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Hires

and carried by all.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Letter from Mr. Cox in support of the Richmond Hill Police Department support in the school system. Mayor Fowler read a letter from Mr. Alan Cox expressing his gratitude and support of the Richmond Hill Police Department for their support in the school system.

1. GEFA Loan approval. Mr. Melton told Council he had placed a copy of the loan approval in Council's packet. Mr. Melton stated he wanted to give Council notification that the loan was approved. Mr. Melton noted they would begin taking bid proposals tomorrow for the pump station projects.

Mr. Melton noted the loan for the Wastewater Treatment Project should follow shortly.

2. Invitation from National Weather Service. Mr. Melton told Council they are invited to the East Coast Hurricane Awareness Tour at the Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport in Savannah on Thursday, May 5th, 2011. Anyone interested please RSVP to Joy Lee.

3. GA Cities Week Calendar of Events. Mr. Melton presented Council with a GA Cities Week Calendar of Events. The breakfast is by invitation only; those invitations will go out tomorrow.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Russ Hightower of Waste Management Presentation on recycling. Mr. Hightower made a presentation of fun facts to Council. Waste Management is the largest recycler in North America. There are several surrounding municipalities and counties that are now implementing recycling programs. The key to a successful program is to educate and to be easy. Waste Management has a Rewards Program that is modeled after the entertainment book where you would get about \$500.00 worth of coupons to be used at various businesses. You would get a 96 gallon container that you could place aluminum cans, plastic bottles, glass bottles, cardboard, and newspapers in and then Waste Management would do the sorting for you. It makes things easier for the consumers. The Reward points would be based on the weight of the recyclables; generally you would be awarded about 100 points every three to four weeks in coupons.

Mr. Hightower told Council they could email him with any questions they may have.

Councilmember Hunter asked what the cost would be to the residents. Mr. Hightower stated it would be \$2.90 increase for twice a month collection.

Councilmember Carpenter commented his problem would be to mandate someone to do this. Some people just don't recycle.

Councilmember Hodges commented she thought it was great, but again you would have some people that recycle and some don't.

Mr. Hightower noted the key to making it successful is sending out the flyers and mailers and educating the residents.

Mr. Melton noted to clarify the difference about the County is that they add the cost to their property tax bill. Here it would be a monthly charge added to the water bill at \$2.90.

Mayor Fowler thanked Mr. Hightower for his presentation.

2. Coastal GA Greenway proposed resolution and Agreement-Jo Hickson. Ms. Hickson told Council that Chatham County passed their Resolution to be the Lead Applicant for submitting the Coastal Georgia Greenway in its entirety for funding as a Transportation Sales Tax project. The sales tax has a provision for road projects and one for pedestrian/bicycle projects. The two would not be competing against each other. The City of Kingsland and St. Marys has passed a Resolution. Ms. Hickson stated her organization is working with all the cities and counties so they could have unanimous support for this project to move forward. Ms. Hickson stated it would actually go before the Coastal Regions Round Table of voters for the project list, then it goes before the voters. Eventually the route would be 155 miles that would link South Carolina to Florida at a cost of sixty million dollars to build the entire route (bridges included).

Councilmember Hunter made a motion to approve the Coastal GA Greenway proposed resolution and Agreement-Jo Hickson. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Carpenter and carried by all.

Ms. Hickson told Council a position was open for a board member and they would love to have someone from the Richmond Hill area to join.

3. Approve/Disapprove request from Chamber of Commerce for \$1000 Donation to help fund Leadership Bryan Program. Mr. Billy Albritton told Council they were trying to keep the Leadership Program running; therefore they are approaching the city as well as the county for donations.

Councilmember Hunter made a motion to approve the request from Chamber of Commerce for \$1000 Donation to help fund Leadership Bryan Program. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Hires and carried by all.

4. Approve/Disapprove a request from the Chamber of Commerce/Great Ogeechee Seafood Festival Committee to sell and serve beer and wine at the

Seafood Festival in J. F. Gregory Park on October 14th and 15th.

Councilmember Hires made a motion to approve the request from the Chamber of Commerce/Great Ogeechee Seafood Festival Committee to sell and serve beer and wine at the Seafood Festival in J. F. Gregory Park on October 14th and 15th. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Hunter and carried by all.

5. Approve/Disapprove a request from Brenda Plummer to serve beer and wine only at a pre-wedding celebration in the Wetlands Center at J. F. Gregory Park on May 15, 2011.

Councilmember Hodges made a motion to approve the request from Brenda Plummer to serve beer and wine only at a pre-wedding celebration in the Wetlands Center at J. F. Gregory Park on May 15, 2011. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Hunter and carried by all.

6. Approve/Disapprove a request from James Watkins to serve beer and wine only at a wedding reception on June 18, 2011 at the Wetlands Center in J. F. Gregory Park.

Councilmember Hodges made a motion to approve the request from James Watkins to serve beer and wine only at a wedding reception on June 18, 2011 at the Wetlands Center in J. F. Gregory Park. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Hires and carried by all.

7. Approve/Disapprove a request from Herb Davis to serve beer and wine only at a birthday party in the Wetlands Center in J. F. Gregory Park on June 5, 2011.

Councilmember Hodges made a motion to approve the request from Herb Davis to serve beer and wine only at a birthday party in the Wetlands Center in J. F. Gregory Park on June 5, 2011. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Hires and carried by all.

8. Approve/Disapprove a request from Rodney Jones to serve beer and wine only at a wedding reception in the Wetlands Center at J. F. Gregory Park on July 15, 2011.

Councilmember Hodges made a motion to approve the request from Rodney Jones to serve beer and wine only at a wedding reception in the Wetlands Center at J. F. Gregory Park on July 15, 2011. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Hires and carried by all.

9. Approve/Disapprove a request from James Smallwood, G3, 3rd Infantry Division, to serve beer and wine only at a unit social in the pavilion at J. F.

Gregory Park on April 29, 2011.

Councilmember Hodges made a motion to approve the request from James Smallwood, G3, 3rd Infantry Division, to serve beer and wine only at a unit social in the pavilion at J. F. Gregory Park on April 29, 2011. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Hires and carried by all.

Mr. Floyd Hilliard, representing the residents of Rushing Street, asks Council if there had been any developments with the Developer Lamar Smith. Mr. Melton told Council Mr. Smith has made an offer of \$15,000.

Councilmember Carpenter made the motion to accept the developer's offer of \$15,000 and adding city funds to make necessary repairs. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Hodges and carried by all.

Councilmember Hodges addressed concern with bare landscape around the city. Councilmember Hodges would like to have a landscape ordinance in place that requires developers to adhere to landscape design. Mayor Fowler noted he was all for that and to include the looks of signage as well. City Manger Melton stated he would put something together and bring it back before Council.

Councilmember Hodges commented she would like to have City Manager Melton contact a firm called C & S Entertainment Group; they book a lot of local bands, and see if they could hold a performance at the amphitheater. Also we would like to have another movie night. Mayor Fowler suggested having one during Ga. Cities Week. Mr. Melton stated he would take care of that.

Councilmember Carpenter made a motion to recess. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Hodges and carried by all.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:45 P. M. in a motion by Councilmember Carpenter, seconded by Councilmember Hodges and carried by all.

Respectfully submitted,

Ursula G. Lee
City Clerk